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Dear Friends,

One of the best parts of this work that we have chosen is that we really **do** get to make a difference in the world!

What we do everyday has the potential to truly affect peoples' lives. Every time we talk with WIC participants, we have an opportunity to say something, demonstrate something, or **BE** something that makes a difference to them!

What happens to us? Sometimes we get overwhelmed with busy clinics, large numbers of people, fussy kids, endless documentation, saying the same things for the millionth time. We may have cramped counseling spaces, co-workers with bad attitudes, language barriers, depressed clients with many problems, and just a few minutes at a time to try to get our nutrition messages across . . . And, often, we may have this feeling that we are working hard but not really making much difference. If this feeling builds up over time, it leads to a general feeling of discontent and burnout.

Hopefully, things aren't this rough for you, but if they are, maybe it's time for you to shake it up! Maybe it's time to take control of all the things you **CAN** control. Maybe it's time for you to grow a little more, develop your skills, and expand your sphere of influence. Maybe it's time for you to be bolder, more adventurous, more of a salesperson for good nutrition. Maybe it's time for you to own your job more, take charge of it, really design it, really expand within it, and really **LOVE** it! Why not!? We spend most of our days doing it. Why not develop the inner resources to shape our work into something we really love?

If you are already enthusiastic and motivated, this training module should provide some good reminders to keep you happy. For your work to continue to be truly satisfying, you must stretch and grow within it. Doing the same things over and over wears anyone out. If you don't want to (or can't find the time to) expand and develop your own personal skills and creativity, **burnout will occur!**

Someone once said, "The world needs not so much to be instructed, as to be reminded." Please consider these BRIGHT IDEAS reminders of ways in which you can grow in your work. Please approach each reminder with an open mind and see what you can use and what you can add.

Try the exercises. Become more conscious of what you do and evaluate how effective you really are. Analyze how people respond to different things you do. Think about and expand your vision of who you are and what you can do to reach people.

The fundamental idea behind BRIGHT IDEAS is that your potential happiness and satisfaction as a nutrition educator are linked directly with your creativity, your development of enhanced communication skills, and your capacity to get personal meaning from your work.

Please consider making your personal growth within your job even **more** of a priority if you are currently overwhelmed with all that you have to do at work and at home, because you can't **afford** to let your job drain you of energy. Sure, every demanding job is going to leave you tired at the end of a long day, whether you're in WIC clinic or working at McDonald's. But the real drain is a job in which you don't get to be your real self or exercise your mind and your talents. The real drain is the job that just gives you back a paycheck, without a feeling of a job well done.

You deserve more than that! You deserve to feel good about your efforts at the end of every clinic. You deserve to know you've made a real contribution--because you have! Your efforts have made the WIC Program one of the most successful public health programs ever. The health of this nation's most vulnerable citizens has been improved with the help of your day-in and day-out efforts. You **DO** make a difference! In small but meaningful ways, our planet and our nation truly are better places, thanks to you.

Each of us has a wealth of experience from our varied backgrounds. I have often thought how enriched we would each be if we could share amongst ourselves what works down at the nitty-gritty level of nutrition education. It is with that thought that I dare to offer you some ideas from my own experience and offer you a way to be exposed to the thoughts of others you work with. I hope you get something out of it. If you, in turn, would like to share back, I would welcome it.

In conclusion, I think we nutrition educators are ready to explore for more richness and more satisfaction in our work. I hope BRIGHT IDEAS can be useful to some of you in this regard. I hope you are reminded of your many strengths and see ways to really build on those strengths, for your own sake and for the sake of your community. The better you are and the happier you are in your work, the more you will share your knowledge with love, enthusiasm, and success.

In all your efforts, I wish you well!

SUSAN MILLER

"In addition to keeping abreast of current nutrition-related information, keep up and improve your teaching skills. Continuing education in the area of listening, verbalizing, encouraging, and supporting the learner is just as significant as updating clinical knowledge."

Sue Rodwell Williams
Nutrition and Diet Therapy, 6th Ed.



There is a lot that BRIGHT IDEAS could include but doesn't. You won't find information here specific to working with groups or on facilitative learning. You will also note that no line is drawn here between nutrition education and nutrition counseling. Many points pertain to both professionals and paraprofessionals. To keep sentences manageable, the caretaker is often called a "parent" or "mom" (although in real life this may not be so) and the caretaker is often called a "participant," even though the actual program participant may be the infant or child.